

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****Statement of Chairman Bennie G. Thompson***Viewpoints on Homeland Security:
A Discussion with the 9/11 Commissioners*

May 19, 2010 (Washington) – Today, Committee on Homeland Security Chairman Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS) delivered the following prepared remarks for the full Committee hearing entitled “Viewpoints on Homeland Security: A Discussion with the 9/11 Commissioners”:

“A lot has changed in this country since the attacks of September 11, 2001. In every facet of American life, there is greater awareness of the risk of terrorism. From the alert citizens in Times Square to the fast-acting passenger on Flight 253 to other ordinary Americans who “said something” to the appropriate authorities when they “saw something” that was concerning—a “culture of vigilance” is taking hold in America.

At the same time, at all levels of government, there are some major changes in the way we view the risk of terrorism and collaborate to address it.

From the establishment of the Department of Homeland Security to intelligence reform to the creation of a consolidated, integrated terrorist watchlist system—the way that the Government organizes itself to make the homeland more secure has changes in significant ways.

The Christmas Day terrorist plot brought to mind observations made in your report. You determined that the attacks revealed four kinds of failures—failures of policy, capability, management, and imagination.

Had Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab successfully brought down Flight 253 last December, with a bomb in his underwear, we would have certainly concluded that, despite years of significant investment and reform, it was a failure of policy, capability, management, and imagination.

I look forward to receiving today’s testimony from the Commissioners about what we still need to do to effectively identify and thwart plots well before they are launched.

I also am interested in hearing your thoughts about the degree to which the Intelligence Community and DHS are mindful of emerging threats. For instance, last month, we received troubling testimony from the former-WMD Commissioners about the threat of a biological attack.

Another novel threat for this country, but a common scenario in other countries, is an attack on a busy rail system.

Finally, you have been great champions for reform of congressional oversight over the Department of Homeland Security. You acknowledge that consolidation of jurisdiction is one of the most difficult challenges in Washington; yet, it is critically important.

As Chairman of this Committee, I have a special appreciation of the extent to which the lack of centralized legislative jurisdiction has damaged the Department. As the prime advocate for needed jurisdictional reform, I am particularly interested in hearing testimony from you on this issue.”

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